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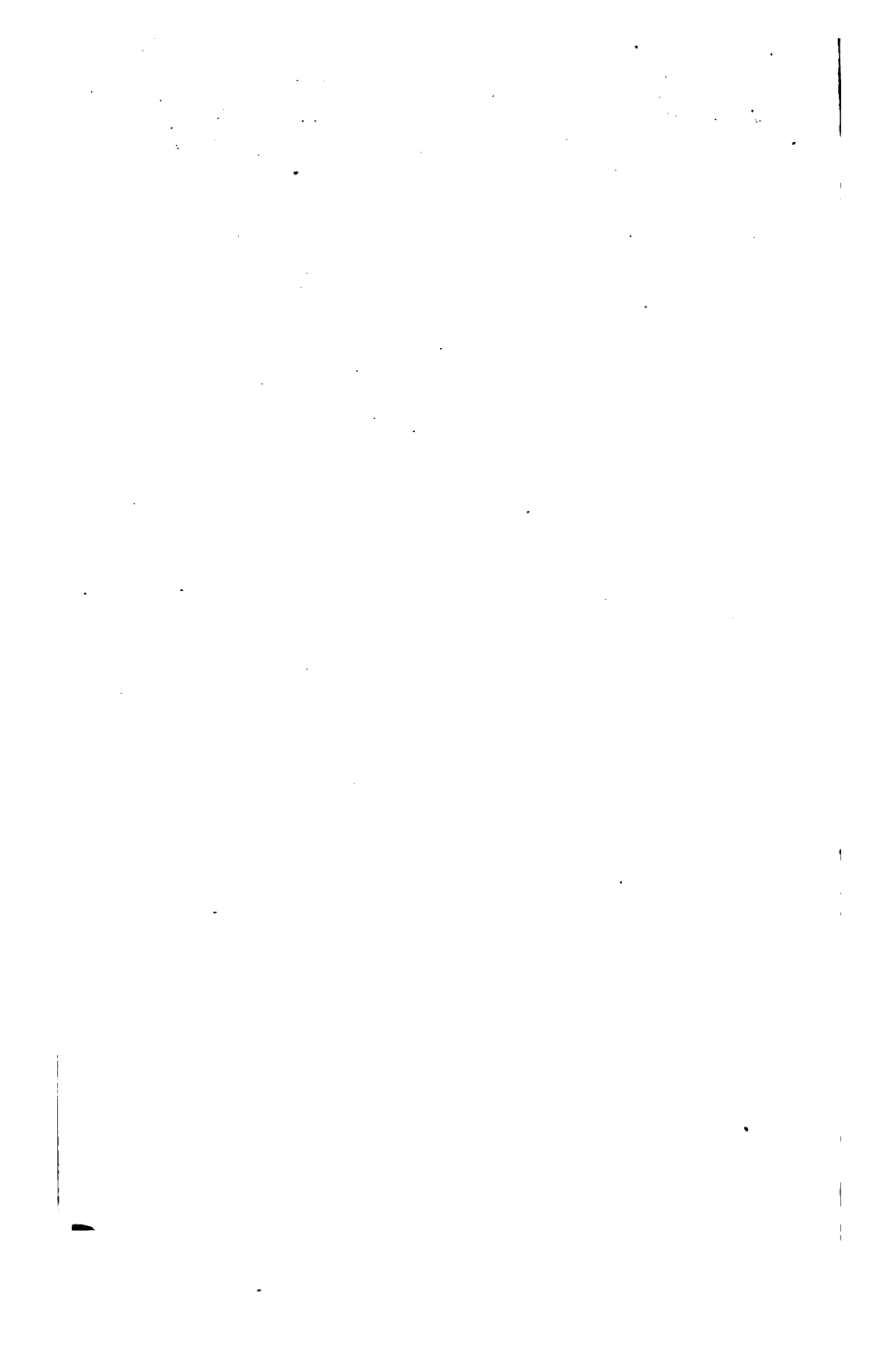
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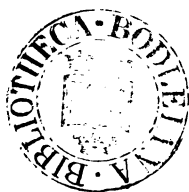


HOMERIC DOUBTS.

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BY

HODDER M. WESTROPP.



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HOMERIC DOUBTS.

Mr. PALEY has put forward his views with regard to the late age of the Homeric poems, on the ground of language. I would here wish to express in a few notes my doubts with regard to the early date of the art as exhibited in the Homeric poems.

I must in the first place confess myself a thorough sceptic with regard to the early date usually assigned to the Iliad, and accept the theories so convincingly put forward by Mr. Paley. The mythology, the art and science, the language appear far too advanced for an early period of literature. The mythology is too grand, the conceptions too magnificent for that period; besides, the arts which would have been required to carry out the conception of the Shield of Achilles would have been enough to task the genius of a Phidias.

From what we know of Greek art in the 6th century, the sculptures of Selinus, the bas-reliefs of the Harpy monuments; it was in a very rude and imperfect state. The lentoid gems which are found scattered among the tombs of Greece and the archipelago, and which exhibit the earliest and rudest form of

Greek art, cannot be dated earlier than the 7th century B.C., all afford evidence that Greek art in the 7th century was of the most primitive and rudest description. It is therefore impossible that the art exhibited in the shield of Achilles could represent the art of the 9th century, the period usually assigned to Homer. In its present form the Iliad cannot be older than the 5th century, and comparative philology shows a good portion of it must be later still. "The books," writes Mr. Harrison, "known to us under the authorship of Homer, did not constitute the Homer of ancient Greece. Large portions of it existed before Herodotus' time, but they were not thrown into their final form much earlier than the time of Plato, who died a hundred years after Herodotus." When Herodotus speaks of Homer, it was doubtless the older Homer he referred to, the original songs and rhapsodies from which our Homer was derived. We meet an analogous case in Sir P. Sidney, when alluding to the ballad of Chevy Chase "as stirring like a trumpet," it was in reality to the old ballad he referred, not to the modern version.

There must have been before the time of the Homeric poems, some bards or minstrels (*αἰδοί*), who composed legendary poems of gods and heroes, and related brave deeds of war, such a one was Demodocus in the Odyssey, who sang the fall of Ilium. Hesiod accurately describes the duties of the *αἰδοί* in the following words:—

αἰδὸς

Μουσάων θεραπῶν κλεία προτέρων ἀνθρώπων

ὑμνήσῃ μακάρας τε θεοὺς οἱ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν.

These songs, sung to the harp by minstrels or recited by rhapsodists,

were the beginnings out of which Epic poetry was slowly shaped by a long line of poets.* Epic poetry must have had its stages of development before it reached its culminating point. An Epic poem, such as the *Iliad*, could not have been produced in full and complete perfection, like Minerva in complete armour from the brain of Jupiter, without their being some earlier poems, which led up to it. The Homeric poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, are thus later versions of more ancient ballads, the compilations of older poems at a later age, and the last results of a slowly growing national epic. Even in far earlier times than the age of Homer, we find it has been the custom to compile and string together separate and independent poems of earlier date, so as to form one whole. Mr. George Smith writes: "The great *Izdubar* epic is a reduction of a number of independent poems of earlier date, the thread which runs through the whole and connects it together being the adventures of *Izdubar*. The epic was probably put together in its present form about 2000 years B.C." It appears to me putting the cart before the horse, placing epic poetry before lyric and ballad poetry: we may as well place the tragic drama before the *Dithyramb*. As Messrs. Butcher and Lang write, "Homer is not a really primitive poet, but comes at the end, not at the beginning, of a great poetical development."

* There seems a striking analogy in the process of composition of the German and French heroic poems and that of the Homeric poems. In Germany the *Minnesingers*, like the *aoidoi*, or bards, composed and recited songs of their own composition, which were carried by wandering minstrels, like the Greek rhapsodists, from place to place throughout Germany. In the same way the French troubadours composed songs or heroic poems, which were afterwards chanted or recited by the jongleurs.

Many things are alluded to in the Homeric poems which are of much later date than that usually assigned to Homer. In it the nine muses are referred to (Od. 24—60), implying a knowledge of tragedy, comedy, history, &c., as well as the decades of the Attic month (Od. 14. 161—4) and the Erechtheum of Pericles (Od. 7. 81).

The Iliad of Homer, we have every reason to believe, is a pure myth, or as Mr. Grote expresses it; “essentially a legend,” a composition solely inspired by the muse:—Achilles’ wrath: Heavenly Goddess sing.

Historic Ilium, if we admit the existence of such a town, was only a peg used by Homer to hang his poem on. “Troy herself,” says Philostratus, “would never have been had not Homer lived, he was really the founder of Troy.” The Troy or Ilion of the Homeric poems was, as Mr. Paley writes, “a purely mythical city.”

Mr. A. H. Sayce’s remarks on Dr. Schliemann’s discoveries at Hissarlik, confirm this view. “Hissarlik,” he writes, “does not satisfy all the requirements of Homeric Troy. It is too small in the first place, capable of containing at most a population of 3000; secondly, what Dr. Schliemann calls the Scœan gate, is in the wrong position, and would not have led toward the Greek camp.” “It is clear,” he adds, “that Homer’s description of Troy is more or less an idealized combination of several sites, since the twin sources of the Scamander, which are made to rise outside of the city walls, are really miles away at the foot of Ida.” Further, it is said in Smith’s Dictionary, article “Troas,” after the time of Alexander, a new city was built further down the plain, below the confluence of the Simois and Scamander, and near the Hellespont, and this city was called Ilium Novum; now if Hissarlik

is the site of Ilium Novum, as Dr. Schliemann writes to prove, the conclusion is inevitable that Hissarlik is not the Troy of Homer.

As for Agamemnon, Achilles, and other heroes of the Trojan war, they must be relegated to the region of myth. Among all nations, there was at an early age, a mythical period when legendary kings and heroes were brought into prominence. In England we have, as told by Geoffrey of Monmouth, the legend of Brutus, the son of Æneas, coming into England, and his descendants, Cymbeline and Lear. It would be as useless to quote the authority of Homer and the Greek tragic poets to prove the existence of Agamemnon and Achilles as it would be to quote Geoffrey of Monmouth, or Shakespeare, to prove the existence of Brutus and his Trojans, and King Lear.

The events of the Greek heroical world were mere myths springing from the creative imagination of the Greek mind. As Mr. Grote writes: "The curious and imaginative Greek, whenever he did not find a recorded past, was uneasy till he had created one."

The Homeric poems tell us little positively, but much negatively, with regard to art. Very few statues are noticed in the Iliad: a statue of Athené is mentioned at Ilium, upon whose knees the Queen Hecuba placed a magnificent peplus: it would appear from this that the statue was in a sitting position, like some early statues of Athenè, and the statues at Branchidæ. But the existence of a higher order of statues may be inferred from several other passages in the Iliad; one, in particular, we may specially notice.

In describing Agamemnon Homer says he was

ὄμματα καὶ κεφαλὴν ἵκελος Διὶ τερπικεραύνῳ

*Ἀρεὶ δὲ ζώνην, στέρνον δὲ Ποσειδάωνι.

Whence did Homer derive these images? The Greeks of the ninth century could not have had any abstract conceptions of the features and forms of the gods, nor had they the power of expressing the human form, even in its most ordinary variations. The likeness must therefore be to some image or representation of these gods; and none but some great sculptor could have made a statue or image which gave such grand features and head to Jupiter; such a noble breast to Neptune. Sculpture must have improved so far as to seize the external forms of life in their fullest beauty, and peculiar features and form must have been fixed for each god. There must have been some well-known representation statues of Zeus, Ares, and Neptune, to whose grand features and forms Homer alludes here,* and these gods must have been distinguished, not by attributes, as in the early period, such as a thunderbolt, a trident, &c., but by peculiar features and forms; as Col. Leake remarks, "the gods were distinguished from one another, among the Athenians, more by countenance, attitude, and form, than by symbols." Statues which would give

* So Anacreon, in describing the beauties of Bathyllus, selects the most beautiful parts of the body from various pictures, the parts for which the pictures were remarkable. He takes the neck from an Adonis, the head and hands from a Mercury, the thighs from Pollux, the belly from a Bacchus. As Anacreon took these ideas of the perfections of the parts of his body from famous pictures which he had seen, so Homer must have taken his idea of the perfections of the different parts of Agamemnon from some celebrated statues which he had seen.

adequate ideas of these grand conceptions of their gods could not have been in existence before the time of Myron, Polycletus, and Phidias; the countenance, figures, and attributes, indeed, of the Greek gods were not fixed until the age of Polycletus and Phidias. The types of Zeus and Athene, as conceived by Homer, are in complete harmony with the conceptions of the gods and goddesses which Phidias embodied in sculpture.

Such conceptions of the deities Zeus, Athenè, Herè, as occur in Homer, could only be produced in an age when the Athenè and Zeus of Phidias, and the Herè of Polycletus, were embodied in Chryselephantine material. This will appear most striking when we compare the Athenè of Phidias with the early attempts at the representation of the goddess, as we can judge from the remains of statues which have come down to us, of the 6th century B.C., such as the Athenè in the metope of Selinus, which is so rude as to be incapable of affording the slightest motive for a lofty, ideal conception of the goddess, such as we find it in Homer. Homer's ideal Athené is also quite at variance with the Athené of early Greek tradition, who was represented as harsh and elderly.

The rude works of Greek sculpture of the ninth century could never have suggested to the author of the *Iliad* these allusions to the eyes and head of Zeus, to the waist of Ares, or to the breast of Neptune.

The statues of the seventh century B.C. were rude and coarse, with scarcely any defined feature of the human countenance, or of the human form, and never could have given any lofty ideas of the gods. The Apollo of Amyclæ in the sixth century B.C. was

only a pillar, to which head, arms, and feet were attached. How could Homer, of the ninth century B.C., have drawn the ideal types of the eyes, the breast, and waist of a god from such a statue?

Indeed there is every reason to believe there was no art in Greece prior to the middle of the eighth century B.C. There are no data to give an earlier origin to Greek art and literature than the eighth century B.C. No works of Greek sculpture can be traced to an earlier date than the sixth century B.C.; and we have no definite allusion to, or example of, writing in Greece than can be put earlier than about 700 B.C.

In Book XXIV. 615., Homer refers to the stone figure of Niobe on Mount Sipylus: judging from the engraving of it in Stewart's *Lydia*, it presents nothing archaic. It is thus described by Stewart: "The figure of Niobe is designed in a sufficiently easy and natural attitude: the hands appear to have been clasped together upon the breast, and the head is slightly inclined on one side, with a pensive air expressive of grief." This figure cannot be of an earlier date than the latter end of the sixth century B.C., later than the seated statues of Branchidæ. The earliest known examples of Greek sculpture are the metopes of Selinus, about 600 B.C., and the art of them is not only rude, but almost grotesque.

If we are to believe that Homer describes works similar to those which he had seen, the description of the shield of Achilles must be assigned to a much later date than the ninth century. No Greek artist of that age could have conceived so grand and

important a work. The conception evidently belongs to a period bordering on the Phidian. The dance represented on the shield of Achilles may be compared with some figures on the well-top found at Corinth, but which does not date earlier than the beginning of the fifth century B.C. The sculptured helmet of Achilles, as described in the eighteenth book, in style could not be earlier than the age of Phidias.

We have two inconsistent and conflicting views before us: on one side the known rudeness of the Greek art of the ninth century; and on the other the Homeric description of a high state of art in the same century which could conceive such a work as the shield of Achilles.

Works in metallurgy are mentioned with much detail in Homer; such as the ornamentation of cuirasses, the shield of Achilles: these were works on relief, put together like the fragments of the chariot from Perugia in the British Museum, and hammered up (*σφυρηλατα*), not cast in the lump; all such being evidences of the art of a later date than that generally assigned to the age of Homer. The employment of various metals in the shield is far beyond the art of the ninth century in Greece: the gods Pallas and Ares are golden and clad in golden armour; black clusters of grapes hang from vines supported by silver props. The watery moat of the vineyard is azure; the fence that encloses it is of tin; the colours of the oxen are diversified by gold and tin; and the dancing youths, draped in delicate, glistening chitons, have swords of gold pendant from silver belts.

Now we are told by both Pliny and Pausanias that the art of casting metals was not discovered until the sixth century by

Rhæcus and Theodorus; while the invention of soldering metals is attributed to Glaucus of Chios, who flourished about 490 B.C. The earliest instance we have of the soldering of different metals is the famous work of Glaucus;—a silver bowl, with an iron base, which was presented to the temple of Delphi by Alyattes, King of Lydia.

The art and science of Homer is the art and science of the Greeks of the age of Peisistratos, or even Pericles, (the latter much more nearly than the former—F. A. Paley). Dress, armour, chariots are all the same as those found on vases subsequent to 560 B.C.: on the painted vase at Naples which represents the death of Priam, we have the heroes of the mythic period of the siege of Troy represented in the dresses and armour of the 5th century, completely coinciding with the figure of the Greek warrior in full armour sculptured on the stele of Aristion, which was doubtless the tombstone of a warrior who had died at Marathon.

It has been observed, “from the date of the historical notices of sculptors backward to that usually assigned to the Homeric poems, there is an interval of several centuries, during which it would appear that the art of sculpture had made no sensible advance—if indeed it had not declined: this being improbable, explanations have been endeavoured to be found by Ulrichs in the confusion which seems to reign among the dates of the earliest earlier sculptors;” but if we place the Homeric poems at their true period, it becomes clear that the art of the Homeric poems is the art of the sixth century B.C., or even later, that Greek art had its regular and successive stages of development, beginning

in the seventh century, and consequently that a fallow interval between the art of the twelfth and sixth centuries is purely imaginary.

There is also another matter which would awaken doubts in the mind of the archæologist ; Homer mentions the walls of the palace of Priam as being built with polished stones *ξεστοιο λιθοιο* : from what we know of the walls built in Greece, or in Grecian colonies, the style of masonry in the ninth century was either Cyclopean or Pelasgian or polygonal ; no walls of cut and polished stone existed in Greece until a much later date

The walls and tombs at Mycenæ and Argos have been attributed to mythic kings commemorated by Homer : why may they not be more justly given to the historical kings of Argos, in the middle of the eighth century, of whom Phidon is the most prominent in history. The historical kings of Argos have been completely hidden from view by the prominence given to the mythical kings.



